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Cylchlythyr | Circular

Providing postgraduate taught information, and launch of 'Steps to Postgraduate Study'

Date: 16 July 2015
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To: Heads of higher education institutions in Wales and those responsible for admissions, marketing departments, learning and teaching, students, postgraduates, careers, information providers
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This circular provides information on a postgraduate tool, which provides information and resources for prospective UK, EU and international students considering a taught postgraduate course.

If you require this document in an alternative accessible format, please telephone us on (029) 2068 2225 or email info@hefcw.ac.uk.



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Introduction

1. This circular provides information on a new postgraduate tool, which provides information and resources for prospective UK, EU and international students considering a taught postgraduate course.
2. HEFCW invites all higher education providers to link to the tool from their postgraduate course pages.

Background

3. The four UK higher education funding bodies (The Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), HEFCW and the Department for Employment and Learning Northern Ireland (DELNI) work collaboratively to support improvements in information provision for prospective PGT students.
4. As well as developing guidance to institutions on providing information for prospective PGT students, a key focus of this work has been researching the [evidence base](#) for information needs. The research findings have highlighted a need to make existing resources more easily accessible and simple to navigate based on the specific kinds of information that evidence suggests are of interest to prospective PGT students.
5. The funders commissioned research by The Careers Research and Advisory Centre (CRAC) and the University of Derby International Centre for Guidance Studies. The outcome report, '[Understanding how people choose to pursue taught postgraduate study](#)', was published in 2014. In response to the report the funders commissioned the online tool.
6. In April 2014 HEFCW published circular [W14/15HE: Guidance on providing information for prospective taught postgraduate students](#). This provided guidance on the types of information taught prospective postgraduate (PGT) students need to help them make decisions about study, and asked HE providers to review and enhance the information they provide to prospective PGT students in advance of an online decision-making tool.

The toolkit

7. The online tool, 'Steps to Postgraduate Study', is now live and available bilingually and can be found at <http://postgradsteps.hefce.ac.uk>. It is sponsored by the four UK higher education funding bodies.
8. The tool was developed by Fluent Interaction and responded to UK-wide feedback from user-testing workshops with prospective PGT students. This work was overseen by the Postgraduate Information Steering Group, Chaired by Dr Sue Rigby from the University of Edinburgh.

9. It highlights questions that students may wish to ask themselves and course providers about their study options, and provides links to where they may find the answers.

Action required

10. HEFCW invites all postgraduate taught course providers to link to this website from their postgraduate information pages. This will ensure that the resource can be found by prospective students at an early stage of their information journey. Research suggests that the first searches for information about postgraduate courses commonly target institutions' web-pages.
11. A logo is provided at **Annex A**. The standard text to accompany this should be the name of the resource 'Steps to Postgraduate Study' and the explanatory text "The official, independent guide for anyone considering a taught postgraduate course". In Welsh, this is "Camau at Astudio Ôl-raddedig" and "Yr adnodd swyddogol ac annibynol sy'n cynnig cyfarwyddyd i unrhyw un sy'n ystyried gwneud cwrs ôl-raddedig a addysgir"¹. We suggest setting up the link so that it opens in a new tab, as this will help the user interact with the resource in tandem with the source institution's own website.
12. Once the link to the tool has been made, we would like institutions to provide HEFCE (on behalf of all the funders) with the web address of the page on which the link is held by emailing pgt@hefce.ac.uk. This will help us evaluate where institutions are siting the link and whether this has any effect on the likelihood of prospective students accessing the resource.
13. Analytics will be used to track usage of the tool, including where visitors come from, and where they spend most time when on the site. We are keen to share the outcomes of this work with institutions: if you would like to be included, please tell HEFCE when providing information on the link. Once the website is active feedback is also encouraged, to inform future improvements.

Next steps

14. The website will be launched and actively promoted to the sector and prospective PGT students in autumn 2015. Other information providers will be encouraged to use 'Steps to Postgraduate Study' under the terms of an Open Government Licence, as well as by linking to the site.

¹ This text has been chosen to reflect user-testing outcomes where prospective PGT students voiced a preference for information that was provided by an official but independent source.

15. 'Steps to Postgraduate Study' is a pilot of a new approach to supporting decision-making for prospective students, and the evaluation of the site will feed into other areas of work on information throughout the student lifecycle.
16. Decisions on the future of the resource will be taken after the site has been live for a minimum of two years.

Further information

17. Enquiries and feedback about the site should be sent to pgt@hefce.ac.uk. For further information, contact Peter Vokes (029 2068 2218; peter.vokes@hefcw.ac.uk).